



Dear friends and neighbors,

Now more than ever, as the Legislature addresses the many challenges facing our state, it is essential for every citizen to participate in the process.

This point can't be made strongly enough: the actions of the Legislature and our state government **directly impact you, your family and our community.** Whatever your concerns or opinions about our state government, I hope you take the time to share them with me.

Your interest and involvement is tremendously valuable to me. Hearing from you is the only way I can provide the best possible representation for our community.

Legislators receive a great deal of technical information from our professional staff, state agencies and trade associations. Yet, much of what we actually decide depends on the views, interests and preferences of the people who elect us. You really can make a difference by staying in contact with my office.

I hope the information in this pamphlet is useful to you and welcome your feedback. I thank you for your calls and letters and remind you that my door is always open, so please let me know how I can help.

**How to make
a difference**



Printed on recycled paper
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

PRESORTED
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Washington State
Department of Printing

Rep. Larry Crouse

A Citizen's Guide to Effective Legislative Participation

Compliments of

**State Representative
Larry Crouse**





**Rep.
Larry Crouse**

There are many ways you can actively participate in our legislative process. Don't be afraid to fully express your personal interests and opinions about public policy, but it is important to follow some basic guidelines.

Know how the process works

To effectively participate in the legislative process, you must first understand the process itself. A basic understanding of Washington's state government, as well as knowing how a bill becomes law, is essential.

There are several great resources for learning about our state government. Using the Internet, a very informative Web site is the Washington State Legislature's at www.leg.wa.gov/wsladm. *Access Washington* is the state government's Web site at www.access.wa.gov. Or you can call the Legislative Information Center, which can send you many useful documents, including a "Glossary of Legislative Terms", "How a Bill Becomes Law" or "How to Testify Before a Committee." They can be reached toll free at 1-800-562-6000.

If there is anything you don't understand about the legislative process, please call my office. We will answer any question.

Make yourself the expert

Before addressing an issue, do your homework. Know the whole issue: who it affects, what others feel about it, how it will influence future trends, what the experts say about it, and any other relevant information. Thorough research allows you to present your viewpoint with confidence and credibility. Combined with your own personal experience, this is the most effective information you can provide.

Being an Active Citizen

Get to know your representatives

To make a difference in the legislative process, you must develop a relationship with your representatives. Keep in mind, it is possible to work effectively with someone, even though your viewpoints may differ. While you may not agree with your representative on every issue, you can still build a positive and lasting relationship.

The best way to get to know your legislators on a personal basis is to spend time with them when the Legislature is not meeting. Arrange a meeting during the months between legislative sessions when we are at home.

- **Personal visit.** Call our offices, introduce yourself, make an appointment for a visit and let us know what you would like to discuss. When you plan a visit, know what you want to say, be factual, and make your comments as brief and specific as you can. If there is something you do not know, be willing to admit it and offer to follow-up with more information later (also an avenue for further discussion).
- **Write a letter.** Express your views or share your concerns on an important issue using the mail. Make your letters brief, clear and to the point. Make sure you include your mailing address and phone number so we know where to respond.
- **Get to know our legislative assistants.** Legislators rely heavily on their professional staff for research and analysis, as well as constituent communications. Never hesitate to communicate with them.
- **Call the toll-free hotline.** During the session, you can call the toll-free legislative hotline at 1-800-562-6000 to leave us a message on any issue.

"It is not the fact of liberty, but the way in which liberty is exercised that ultimately determines whether liberty itself survives."
— Dorothy Thompson

"There is but one element of government, and that is THE PEOPLE. From this springs all government."
— John Adams

Network with others in your community

Much of the information you need to be effective in the legislative process can be obtained from other concerned and active citizens. Most interest areas are represented by informal citizen groups or even professional membership organizations.

Find out whether there are groups that share your concerns and establish a network. A group of concerned citizens can be much more effective working together, rather than as separate individuals trying to accomplish the same goal.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

Regardless of how frequently you contact your legislators, you will be far more effective following these points:

1. Be well prepared for your discussions.
2. Provide a written statement with all verbal presentations.
3. Make letters specific and concise.

Whatever position you represent, however, your participation makes a difference.

Our legislative process is one way each of us may contribute to the quality of life we experience in our state. Your willingness to be a responsible, involved participant is crucial to the decision-making process.

Representative Larry Crouse

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Technology, Telecommunications & Energy - *Co-chair*
Eastern Washington Caucus
Elections, Select Committee on Local Government & Housing

Web site:

www.leg.wa.gov/house/members/d4_1b.htm
Toll-free Legislative Hotline:
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